

NSC BRIEFING

26 OCTOBER 1956

EFFECTS OF FRENCH COUP IN NORTH AFRICA

- I. 22 Oct French seizure of five Algerian nationalist leaders being acclaimed in Paris, but threatens to be explosive issue in North Africa. So far some 60 French massacred by angry Moroccans, and late report states that Tunisian troops are fighting French along Algerian frontier.
- A. Five--all of them leaders-in-exile, not local guerrillas--were in plane under charter to Moroccan sultan (with French crew) en route Rabat via Balearics to Tunis for conference. French arranged for plane to land at Algiers instead, clapped five into jail. Two of five--ben Bella and Khider, are ranking leaders of revolt.

B.

25X1X4

to back it. The overwhelming popularity of the move

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with the National Assembly and the French public apparently outweighed Mollet's initial qualms.

- C. Execution of the abduction involved orders to pilot to fly to Algiers instead of Tunis. Six French jet fighters reportedly rendezvoused with the transport near the Balearics and shadowed the flight to its destination. Moroccan government monitors overheard the French orders to the pilot and instructed him to remain at his refueling point, Palma. If this Moroccan instruction was received at all, it was ignored.

II. French claim documents, interrogation indicate involvement of Moroccan Sultan, Tunisian Premier, some unnamed French politicians and Egyptian government in Algerian revolt.

- A. Morocco and Tunisia have both protested kidnapping, recalled their Ambassadors from Paris, asked US, UK, and Spanish intervention.
- B. Arab League has asked UN Security Council action, and Arab-Asian Bloc at UN has requested Hammarskjold's intervention.
- C. Meanwhile, general strikes being called in Morocco, Tunisia. Both the Sultan and Premier Bourghiba may be forced to revise present moderate policies towards French, meet extremist demands.
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D. Bourghiba, in announcing border clashes to Constituent Assembly on 25 Oct, won ovation with declaration Tunisians prefer "death to degradation, combat to servitude".

III. French Gov't is standing firm on seizure, although worried by African reactions. Assembly, except for Communists, enthusiastic, and public delighted. However, Undersecretary Savary has resigned in protest.

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